

Staff Reporter of THE W

HIST JOURNAL

"The master of the House wanted to disrupt or slow down the construction of the gas pipeline but he achieved quite an opposite effect: The embargo only piqued the pride of the Soviet people and whipped up the workers' enthusiasm. In this sense Reagan's embargo has boomeranged against him."

With words like these from Tass, the Soviet government news agency, the Russian propaganda machine has mounted an offensive to show that Moscow doesn't need the embargoed U.S. high-technology equipment to finish on schedule the 3,600-mile pipeline that will carry 1.41 trillion cubic feet of Siberian natural gas annually to Western Europe.

As punishment for Soviet actions in Afghanistan and Poland, President Reagan last December

barred U.S. companies from delivering pipeline equipment to the Soviets and in June extended the embargo to include

equipment built by foreign licensees of U.S. companies. The move angered U.S. allies and prompted France, Italy and Britain to tell their companies using U.S. technology not to comply with the American ban—a point on which the Soviet propaganda effort has gleefully pounced.

But the loud Soviet protestations that they can go it alone, without U.S. technology, have led some to conclude, like Shakespeare did of the queen in Hamlet, that Moscow "doth protest too much."

The main point made repeatedly in Soviet publications and broadcasts, both at home and in many languages abroad, is that Russian industry is being mobilized to design and produce the necessary equipment, including heavy pipelaying tractors and high-capacity compressors that currently require U.S. designed equipment. In some cases, the Russians claim, the new equipment is better than the American goods it replaces.

Another thrust of the Russian media campaign is that the Reagan embargo has challenged Soviet workers to new heights of creativity and industriousness.

And finally, Moscow's propaganda seeks to widen the rift that already has developed between Washington and its allies over the pipeline question. Ten days before London announced yesterday that British companies would be forbidden to comply with the U.S. embargo, the Russians had already said this would be Britain's stand.

Massive Effort

A major portion of the Russian campaign consists of touting their own technical and labor capabilities. "Mr. Reagan does not know perhaps that the (Urengoy) export gas pipeline . . . is only one of the six technically identical gas pipelines now being built in the Soviet Union under the current five-year plan," Literaturnaya Gazeta reported. "It took the Americans 10 years to build the trans-Alaska pipeline. The Soviet Union commissions one such pipeline every year . . ."

The Leningrad correspondent of the state radio network reported from that city that "more than 20 enterprises" were designing and building large, 25,000-kilowatt gas pumping units of the type embargoed by the U.S. He reported, "During the

have talked to workers and designers, and they are all of the same opinion. . . . The economic sanctions by the U.S. administration . . . will not hamper the construction of the Siberia-Western Europe gas pipeline. Our country will be able to create the necessary equipment at home."

The report contended that Leningrad's Nevsky Lenin works is to start mass production of the 25,000-kilowatt turbine pumps next year. The pumps "are in no way inferior to the best foreign models," said Arkady Lalayants, deputy chairman of the Soviet State Planning Committee, in another domestic broadcast.

And according to the first deputy minister of construction of petroleum and gas industry enterprises, Yury Petrovich Batalin, the Russians have even modified old jet engines for use as high power gas pipeline compressors. "Gas will start to flow along the pipe (to West Europe) at the start of 1984," the scheduled start-up date, Mr. Batalin told a correspondent of the Italian newspaper, L'Unita.

"Reagan's move has prompted a tide of patriotism: The gas pipeline is becoming a symbol," he said. "We will manage to assemble no fewer than 120,000 workers who will work on (the pipeline) with the utmost commitment."

Similar claims are being made about Soviet ability to manufacture the steel pipe used in the project, and even to duplicate the special pipelaying tractors that were supposed to come from the U.S. or from other countries using U.S. designs. "Now we are making them for ourselves," Mr. Lalayants of the State Planning Committee said on the broadcast. "Last year, we produced 100 powerful pipelayers with a carrying capacity of 80 tons each, and by the end of the five-year plan we plan to produce approximately 2,000 more; and these Soviet-made machines are in no way inferior to American ones."

Exploiting Allied Rift

The Soviet propaganda campaign has pressed hard to exploit the embargo-created rift in the Western alliance. Said one broadcast: "It is well understood in the West that the (U.S. embargo) is aimed not only against the U.S.S.R., but also against (West Germany), France and Britain, who are . . . economic competitors. . . . This once again confirms that when it is advantageous for them, imperialist circles can, without batting an eye, sacrifice any of the interests of their partners in the alliance, which is just what President Reagan intends to do in this case."

The fact that the Soviets claim the U.S. embargo is insignificant doesn't jibe with the high volume of its propaganda effort. The Communist youth newspaper, Komsomolskaya Pravda, seemed to question the embargo's alleged ineffectiveness when it asked: "Why, then, did the Soviet Union need to enlist foreign credit and technology for this project" in the first place?

The answer, according to the newspaper, is because Moscow wanted to "strengthen the climate of confidence" between West Europe and the East bloc. "The fact is that the gas-for-pipes barter deal is a model of the mutually beneficial Europe-wide division of labor. It enables the Soviet Union to make use of West European industries' underutilized production capacities and enables the West European countries . . . to diversify their energy

Foreign Insight

Soviet Union's Major Propaganda Blitz
Calls U.S. Pipeline Embargo Ineffective